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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8182  
RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5426  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2656  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2819  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3542  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4735  
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5287  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9894  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0423  
RHMF/ISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001992

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TAGS: ECON PGOV PREL BL

SUBJECT: MARCH FOR PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY, SANTA CRUZ INVITES  
MORALES TO DIALOGUE

Classified By: Ecopol Chief Andrew Erickson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (U) Some five thousand people peacefully marched in Montero, Santa Cruz on July 17th in favor of provincial and indigenous autonomy within the department of Santa Cruz. A commission was named to draw up a provincial autonomy proposal. On the same day, Santa Cruz Civic Committee President Branko Marinkovic issued a public invitation for President Morales to come to Santa Cruz and discuss areas of concern. The Civic Committee invitation follows a similar invitation issued by the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce (CAINCO) on July 15. End summary.

¶2. (U) Some five thousand people peacefully marched in Montero, Santa Cruz on July 17th in favor of provincial and indigenous autonomy within the department of Santa Cruz. Montero is Santa Cruz department's second largest city, approximately two hundred miles from the city of Santa Cruz. March leaders say they advocate provincial/indigenous autonomy in order to better control financial resources sent by the department. A commission was named to draw up a provincial autonomy proposal. It is unclear if the provincial autonomy proposal would be at odds with departmental autonomy under consideration by the Constituent Assembly.

¶3. (C) On the same day, the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, led by Branko Marinkovic, issued a public invitation for President Evo Morales to come to Santa Cruz and discuss mutual topics of concern. The Civic Committee has accused the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party of organizing meetings against departmental autonomy in Santa Cruz and warned this could provoke violence. The Civic Committee invitation follows a similar invitation by CAINCO on July 15, requesting President Morales to come and discuss economic concerns. Presidential Palace spokesperson Alex Conteras responded on July 18 that the government would take its time to study the invitation. Civic Committee member German

Castedo told Emboff on July 18 that the committee wants to show the Bolivian public that Santa Cruz is open to talks and that he doubts Morales will accept the invitation, adding "the central government seems to want things to get out of control in Santa Cruz."

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COMMENT  
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¶4. (C) Montero (population 70,000) is a center of gravity for indigenous immigrants from the western highlands. It would be relatively easy for the MAS to organize marches in favor of indigenous autonomy as a way of weakening departmental autonomy. The MAS also risks raising unrealistic expectations in Montero, which is still waiting for construction to begin on a new university that President Morales promised over one year ago. Both CAINCO and the Santa Cruz Civic Committee have legitimate concerns regarding the economy and political climate. Their invitations to discuss areas of concerns with the president puts the onus on the GOB, which likes to bill itself as "the government of dialogue." End Comment.

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